

*FVPSA, which expired in 2008, funds basic operation costs at shelters across the country.*

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) today introduced the reauthorization of the Family Violence and Prevention Services Act (FVPSA), H.R. 4116, along with Representatives Aaron Schock (R-Ill.), Gregorio Sablan (I-Northern Mariana Islands), and Judy Biggert (R-Ill.). FVPSA is the only federal legislation that provides the funding to keep the lights on and the doors open at local domestic violence shelters across the country.

FVPSA was last reauthorized in 2003, and it is woefully underfunded and in need of critical updates. As financial pressures due to a down economy cause family stress to climb, domestic violence shelters across the country have been called upon to open their doors to more and more victims who are attempting to flee life-threatening violence. The shelters funded by FVPSA provide emergency shelter, crisis counseling, and support for victims and their children --- and they do it on a shoestring budget.

At one shelter in Madison, Wisconsin, emergency calls requesting shelter increased by 144 percent between 2008 and 2009. As shelters try not to turn away victims seeking help, they being are forced to meet growing demands on shrinking budgets. The results are cuts in counseling and legal advocacy, as well as increased wait times for transitional housing.

“Victims of domestic violence should never be forced to go back to their abusers because they don’t have access to an emergency shelter – or because they are worried about their financial stability if they leave,” Congresswoman Moore said. “Calls for help have skyrocketed over the past year as the economy has suffered, and we have a duty to help these victims and their kids find safety and rebuild their lives. This legislation provides the critical resources that make shelters and lifesaving services available to victims.”

“The National Network to End Domestic Violence applauds Representatives Moore, Schock, Biggert and Sablan for their leadership on this life-saving legislation,” said a spokesperson for the National Network. “This bill – the only federal funding dedicated to domestic violence shelters – is an investment in saving lives. This legislation represents hope for millions of survivors and their children who seek safety from violent homes.”

In addition to increasing the authorization level for local shelters and programs to \$250 million (from \$175 million), this legislation creates new grants for organizations to target traditionally underserved communities – including communities of color - with support. The bill improves the National Domestic Violence Hotline so that tools like instant messaging and text messaging will be available to reach a larger portion of the population, particularly youth victims of dating violence.

In addition, new programs included in the legislation will enable shelters to tailor programs to children exposed to domestic violence, so that these children do not continue the vicious cycle of victimization and abuse as they grow up.

“It is absolutely critical that domestic violence centers throughout the country have the necessary funding to operate,” said Congressman Schock. “Not only does this legislation ensure they will have the resources to function, it expands essential services for victims, teens and children by specializing their programs and utilizing new technologies. All too often, children who have been exposed to the horrors of domestic violence perpetuate the cycle of abuse. This legislation enables shelters to tailor their programs to prevent abuse before it starts.”

“The distressed economy has increased the needs of survivors and therefore the demand on local service providers,” said Patti Seger, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence and a member of the National Network's Board of Directors. “The legislation provides the stable funding shelters and programs need to continue their lifesaving work during these difficult times. Those who work on behalf of survivors across Wisconsin and the nation appreciate Representative Moore's work on the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act. She is a true advocate for survivors of domestic violence.”

“The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, one of several US territories, currently has one shelter to serve a population of 60,000 residents,” Rep. Sablan said. “Shelters in most US territories are even more underfunded than those in the states, and are often required to serve more victims. This legislation provides critically needed resources to territories like the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam, and will allow territories to compete for outreach grants so that they can better serve their diverse communities.”

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